



THE
LIFE AND DEATH
OF
ROBIN HOOD,

The Renowned Out-law,

Who lived and died A. D. 1198; being the ninth
year of the reign of King Richard I. commonly
called Cœur de Lion.



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LIFE AND DEATH

OF

ROBERT BLOOD

A NOVEL IN THREE VOLUMES

By the Author of "The Life of Robert Blood," &c. &c. &c.
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The Renowned Out-law.

BOTH gentlemen and yoemen bold,
Or whatever you are ;
To hear a stately story told,
Attention now prepare :
It is a tale of Robin Hood,
That I to you will tell ;
Which being rightly understood,
I know will please you well.

This Robin (so much talk'd on)
 Was once of man of fame,
 Instiled Earl of Huntington,
 Lord Robin Hood by name:
 In courtship and magnificence,
 His carriage won him praise,
 And greater favour with his prince,
 Then any in his days.

In bounteous liberality,
 He too much did excel,
 And loved men of quality,
 More than exceeding well.
 His great revenues all he sold,
 For wine and costly cheer;
 He kept three hundred bowmen bold,
 He shooting lov'd so dear.

No archer living in his time,
 With him might well compare;
 He practic'd all his youthful prime
 That exercise most rare.
 At last, by his profound expence,
 He had consum'd his wealth;
 And being out-law'd by his prince,
 In woods he liv'd by stealth.

The Abbot of St. Mary's rich,
 To whom he money owed;
 His hatred to the Earl was such,
 That he his downfall wrought;
 So being out-lawed, as 'tis told,
 He with a crew went forth,
 Of lusty cutters, stout and bold,
 And robbed in the North.

Amongst the rest, one Little John,
 A yeoman bold and free,
 Who could (if it stood him upon)
 With ease encounter three.
 One hundred men in all he got,
 With whom, the story says,
 Three hundred common men durst not
 Hold combat any ways.

The Yorkshire woods frequented much,
 And Lancashire also;
 Wherein the practices were such,
 That they wrought muckle woe.
 None rich durst travel to and fro;
 Tho' ne'er so strongly arm'd;
 But by these thieyes, so strong in shew,
 They still were rob'd and harm'd.

His chiefest spite to the clergy was,
 That liv'd in monstrous pride ;
 No one of them he could let pass
 Along the highway side ;
 But first they must to dinner go,
 And afterwards to shift ;
 Full many a one he served so,
 Thus while he liv'd by theft.

No monks or friars he would let go,
 Without paying their fees ;
 If they thought much to be used so,
 Their gear he made them leave.
 For such as they the country fill'd
 With bastards in those days ;
 Which to prevent those sparks they geld
 All that came in their ways.

But Robin Hood so gentle was,
 And bore so brave a mind,
 If any in distress should pass,
 To them he was so kind,
 That he would give and lend to them,
 To help them in their need ;
 Thus made all poor men pray for him
 And wish he well might speed.

The widow and the fatherless
 He would send means unto ;
 And those who famine did oppress,
 Found him a friendly foe :
 Nor would he do the woman wrong,
 But see her safe convey'd ;
 He would protect with power strong,
 All those who crav'd his aid.

The Abbot of St. Mary's then,
 Who undid him before,
 Was riding with his two hundred men,
 And gold and silver store ;
 But Robin Hood upon him set
 With his courageous sparks,
 And all the coin by force did get,
 Which was twelve thousand marks.

He bound the Abbot to a tree,
 And would not let him pass,
 Before that (to his men and he)
 His lordship said a mass,
 Which being done, upon his horse
 He set him fast astride,
 And with his face the contrair course,
 He forced him to ride.

His men were forc'd to be his guide,
 For he rode backwards home ;
 The Abbot being thus vilified,
 Did sorely chafe and foam :
 Thus Robin Hood did vindicate
 His former wrongs receiv'd ;
 For 'twas the covetous prelate,
 That him of land bereav'd.

The Abbot he rode to the king,
 With all the haste he could ;
 And to his grace he every thing
 Exactly did unfold :
 And said, that if no course was ta'en
 (By force or stratagem)
 To take this rebel and his train,
 No man could pass for them.

The king protested by and by,
 Unto the Abbot then,
 That Robin Hood with speed should die
 With all his merry men :
 But ere the king did any send,
 He did another feat,
 Which did his grace much more offend,
 The fact indeed was great.

For in a short time after,
 The king's receiver's went
 Towards London with the coin they got
 For's highness's northern rent.
 Bold Robin Hood and Little John,
 With the rest of their train,
 Not dreading law, set them upon,
 And did their gold obtain.

The king much moved at the same,
 And th' Abbot's talk also,
 In this his anger did proclaim,
 And sent words to and fro
 That whosoe'er alive or dead,
 Could bring him Robin Hood,
 Should have one thousand merks well
 In gold and silver good, [paid,

This promise of the king's did make
 Full many a yeoman bold,
 Attempt stout Robin Hood to take,
 With all the force they could:
 But still when any came to him,
 Within the gay green wood;
 And wanted for to speak to him,
 His men in order stood.

He shew'd to them such martial sport
 With his long bow and arrow,
 That they of him did give report,
 How that it was great sorrow,
 That such a worthy man as he,
 Should thus be put to shift ;
 Being of late a lord of high degree,
 Of living quite bereft.

The king to take him more and more,
 Sent men of mickle might ;
 But he and his still beat them sore,
 And conquer'd them in fight ;
 Or else with love and courtesy,
 To him he won their hearts ;
 Thus still he liv'd by robbery,
 Throughout the northern parts.

And all the country stood in dread.
 Of Robin and his men ;
 For stouter lads ne'er liv'd by bread,
 In those days, nor since then ;
 The Abbot which before I nam'd,
 Sought all the means he could,
 To have by force this rebel ta'en,
 And his adherents bold.

Therefore he arm'd five hundred men
 With furniture complete ;
 But the out-laws slew half of them
 And made the rest retreat :
 The long bow and the arrow keen,
 They were so used unto,
 That still he kept the forest green
 In spite of the proudest foe.

Twelve of the Abbot's men he took,
 Who came to have him ta'en ;
 When all the rest the field forsook,
 These he did entertain
 With banqueting and merriment ;
 And, having used him well,
 He to their landlord them safely sent,
 And will'd them him to tell,

That if he would be pleased at last
 To beg of our good king,
 That he might pardon what was past,
 And him to favour bring :
 He would surrender back again
 The money, which before
 Was taken by him and his men
 From him and many more.

Poor men might safely pass by him,
 And some that way would chuse ;
 For well they knew, that to help them,
 He ever more did use.
 But where he knew a miser rich,
 That did the poor oppress,
 To feel his coin his hands did itch,
 He'd have it more or less.

And sometimes when the highway fail'd,
 Then he his courage rouses ;
 He and his men have oft assail'd
 Such rich men in their houses.
 So that thro' dread of Robin then,
 And his advent'rou; crew,
 The misers kept great store of men,
 Which else maintain'd but few.

King Richard, of that name the first,
 Sur-named Cœur de Lion ;
 Went to defeat the Pagans curst,
 Who kept the coasts of Sion.
 The bishop of Ely, chancellor,
 Was the vice-roy here ;
 Who, like a potent emperor,
 Did proudly domineer.

Our chronicles of him report,
 That commonly he rode, [court,
 With a thousand horse from court to
 Where he would make abode:
 He riding down towards the north,
 With his aforesaid train;
 Robin and his men did issue forth,
 Them all to entertain.

And with the gallant grey goose wing,
 They shew'd to them such play,
 They made their horses kick and fling,
 And down their riders lay.
 Full glad and fain the bishop was,
 For all his thousand men,
 To seek what means he could to pass
 From out of Robin's ken.

Two hundred of his men were kill'd,
 And fourscore horses good;
 Thirty, who did as captives yield,
 Were carried to the green wood;
 Which afterwards were ransomed
 For twenty marks a man,
 The rest set spurs to horse and fled
 To the town of Warrington.

The Bishop sore enraged then,
 Did in king Richard's name,
 Muster up a power of northern men,
 These out-laws bold to tame :
 But Robin with his courtesy,
 So won the meanest sort,
 That they were loth on him to try
 What rigour did import.

So that bold Robin and his train,
 Did live unhurt by them,
 Until King Richard came,
 From fair Jerusalem :
 And then the talk of Robin Hood,
 His royal ears did fill ;
 His grace admir'd that in the green
 He was continued still. [wood

So that the country far and near,
 Did give him great applause ;
 But none of them need stand in fear,
 But such as broke the laws :
 He wished well unto the king,
 And pray'd still for his health,
 And never practis'd any thing,
 Against his common-wealth.

Only because he was undone
 By the cruel clergy then ;
 All means that he could think upon,
 To vex such cruel men,
 He enterpris'd with hateful spleen,
 In which he was to blame,
 For fault of some to wreck his teen,
 On all that by him came.

With wealth which he by robbery got,
 Eight alm-houses he built ;
 Thinking thereby to purge the blot
 Of blood which he had spilt ;
 Such was their blind devotion then,
 Depending on their works ;
 Which, if 'twere true, we Christians
 Inferior were to Turks.

But to speak true of Robin Hood,
 And wrong him not a jot,
 Yet never would shed any man's blood
 That him invaded not :
 Nor would he injure husbandmen,
 That toil at cart or plough ;
 For well he knew were't not for them,
 To live no man knew how.

The king in person, with some lords,
 To Nottingham did ride,
 To try what strength and skill affords,
 To crush the out-laws pride:
 And as he once before had done,
 He did again proclaim,
 That whosoever would take upon,
 To bring to Nottingham,

Or any place within the lands,
 Rebellious Robin Hood,
 Should be preferred in place to stand
 With those of noble blood.
 When Robin heard of the same,
 Within a little space,
 Into the town of Nottingham,
 A letter to his grace

He shot upon an arrow head,
 One evening cunningly;
 Which was brought to the king & read,
 Before his majesty:
 The tenor of the letter was,
 That Robin would submit,
 And be true liege-man to his grace,
 In any thing that's fit.

So that his highness would forgive
 Him and his merry men all;
 If not, he must in the green wood live,
 And take what chance did fall,
 The king would fain have pardon'd him,
 But that some lords did say,
 This precedent will much condemn
 Your grace another day.

While that the king and lords did stay
 Debating on this thing,
 Some of the out-laws fled away
 Unto the Scottish king;
 For they suppos'd if he was ta'en,
 Or to the king did yield,
 By the commons all the rest of's train,
 Full quickly would be quell'd.

Of more than full an hundred men,
 But forty tarried still,
 Who were resolved to stick to him,
 Let fortune work her will;
 If none had fled, all for his sake
 Had got their pardon free;
 The king to favour meant to take
 His merry men and he.

But ere the pardon to him came,
 This famous archer died :
 His death and manner of the same,
 I'll presently describe ;
 For being vex'd to think upon
 His followers revolt,
 In melancholy passion
 He did recount his fault.

Perfidious traitors, said he then,
 In all your dangers past,
 Have I you guarded as my men,
 To leave me thus at last !
 This sad perplexity did cause
 A fever, as some say,
 Which him into confusion draws,
 Though in a stranger way.

This deadly danger to prevent,
 He hied him with all speed
 Into a nunnery, with intent
 For his health's sake to bleed,
 A faithless fair did there pretend,
 In love, to let him blood ;
 But she by falseness wrought the end
 Of famous Robin Hood.

'The fair, as some say, did this
 'To vindicate the wrong
 Which to the clergy him and his
 Had done by power strong.
 Thus died he by treachery,
 Who could not die by force ;
 Had he liv'd longer, certainly
 King Richard, in remorse,

Had into favour him receiv'd,
 His brave men elevated :
 'Tis pity he was of life bereav'd,
 By one that he so hated :
 A treacherous leech this friar was,
 To let him bleed to death ;
 And Robin was methinks an ass,
 To trust him with his breath.

His corps the prioress of the place,
 (The day next that he died,)
 Caus'd to be buried (in mean case)
 Close by the high-way side ;
 And over him she caus'd a stone
 To be fixed in the ground ;
 An epitaph was set thereon,
 Wherein his name was foud,

The date of the year, and date also,
 She made to be set on there,
 That all that by that way did go,
 Might see it plan appear ;
 That such a man as Robin Hood,
 Was buried in that place :
 And how he liv'd in the green wood,
 And robb'd there for a space.

It seems that tho' the clergy he
 Had put to muckle woe,
 He should not quite forgotten be,
 Altho' he was their foe :
 This woman tho' she did him hate,
 Yet lov'd his memory ;
 And thought it a wonderous pity that
 His fame with him should die.

His epitaph, as records tell,
 Within these hundred years,
 By many was discerned well,
 But time all thing out-wears.
 His followers, when he was dead,
 Were some received to grace ;
 The rest to foreign countries fled,
 And left their native place.

And though his funeral was but mean,
 This woman had in mind,
 That his fame should be buried clean,
 From those that came behind :
 For certainly before, nor since,
 No man e'er understood,
 Under the reign of any prince,
 Of one like Robin Hood.

Full thirteen years and something more,
 These out-laws lived thus,
 Fear'd of the rich, lov'd of the poor,
 A thing most marvellous :
 A thing impossible to us,
 This story seems to be :
 None dares be now so venturous,
 But times are chang'd we see.

We that live in those latter days
 Of civil government,
 (If need be) have an hundred ways
 Such out-laws to prevent.
 In those days men more barbarous were,
 And lived less in awe ;
 Now, God be thanked, people fear,
 More to offend the law.

No roaring guns were then use,
 They dreamt of no such thing ;
 Our Englishmen in fight did chuse,
 The gallant grey goose wing ;
 In which activity those men,
 Through practice were so good,
 That in those days none equall'd them,
 Especially Robin Hood.

So that it seems keeping in caves,
 In woods and forests thick,
 They'd beat a multitude with staves,
 Their arrows did so prick ;
 And none durst near unto them come,
 Unless in courtesy ;
 All such he bravely would send home
 With mirth and jollity.

Which courtesy won him such love,
 As I before have told ;
 'Twas the chief cause that he did prove
 More prosperous than he would :
 Let us be thankful for these times
 Of plenty, truth, and peace ;
 And leave our great and horrid crimes,
 Lest they cause this to cease.

I know there's many feigned tales,
 Of Robin and his crew,
 But chronicles which seldom fail,
 Report this to be true ;
 Let none then think this is a lie,
 For if 'twere put to the worst,
 They might the truth descry,
 In reign of Richard the first.

If any reader please to try,
 As I direction shew,
 The truth of this brave history,
 He'll find it true I know :
 And I shall think my labour well
 Bestow'd to purpose good,
 When 't shall be said, that I did tell
 True tales of Robin Hood.

The Epitaph which the Prioress of the Monastery of Kirkslay in Yorkshire, set over Robin Hood, which (as before mentioned) was to be read within these hundred years, though in old broken English, much to the same sense and meaning.

Decembris quarto Die 1198. Anno

Regni Richardi, Primi IX.

Robert, Earl of Huntington,
Lies under this little stone;
No archer was like him so good,
His wildness nam'd him Robin Hood.
Full thirteen years and something more,
These northern parts he vexed sore,
Such out-laws as he and his men,
May England never know again.

Some other superstitious words were in it which I thought fit to leave out.

